



# THE VOTER

The monthly publication of the Toledo-Lucas County League of Women Voters

November 2008

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**Here's the answer to the question:  
"Why doesn't the League host national debates anymore?"**

By Erica Geer, President of The League of Women Voters of the Akron Area

The role of the League of Women Voters in the Presidential debates was an important one. The brief history that follows was taken from NationMaster.com, an online encyclopedia. Reading about the League's involvement and the circumstances of its withdrawal from the debates made me proud, once again, to be a part of such a dedicated and highly principled organization. I think you will feel the same.

In 1952, the League of Women Voters hosted the first nationally-televised debate in U.S. history. It differed from the televised Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960 in that all candidates from both parties were present instead of just the two nominated candidates. The League remained out of the arena of debates until the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) amended the equal time provision, declaring presidential debates "bona fide news events" which, if hosted by a third party, exempted debates from the equal time provision. (In fact, no presidential debates were held in 1964, 1968, or 1972.)

The LWV stepped in as the third party needed for this new regulation and hosted presidential debates from 1976 to 1984. The LWV codified the formats of presidential debates, splitting them into categories based on how questions are asked. The League used an open format, allowing follow-up questions among candidates. These types of questions are difficult to prepare for before a debate - they're unpredictable.

The League ran a tight ship from 1976 to 1988. As a nonpartisan organization, it was ardent in affording equal time to all candidates. The organization was also the keeper of the format, the questions and the debate in general. It served as host, and the candidates were invited to participate or not; the debate would go on without them. The LWV's refusal to acquiesce to candidates' demands made presidential debates a powerful force in U.S. politics.

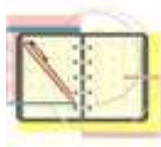
This made presidential debates dangerous. In a given election cycle, candidates from any party could face humiliation, the loss of a lead in the polls and defeat, all because of a single debate. So the two major parties in the United States came together to wrestle control of presidential debates from the League of Women Voters.

In 1987, the LWV withdrew from debate sponsorship, in protest of the major party candidates attempting to dictate nearly every aspect of how the debates were conducted. On October 2, 1988, the LWV's 14 trustees voted unanimously to pull out of the debates, and on October 3 they issued a dramatic press release:

The League of Women Voters is withdrawing sponsorship of the Presidential debates because the demands of the two campaign organizations would perpetrate a fraud on the American voter. It has become clear to us that the candidates' organizations aim to add debates to their list of campaign-trail charades devoid of substance, spontaneity and answers to tough questions. The League has no intention of becoming an accessory to the hoodwinking of the American public.

The two major political parties had their own loyalists ready to take over the debates and did so in 1988 under the name of the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD). The two parties presented the 1988 debates and have done so every election cycle since. The commission has been headed since its inception by former chairs of the Republican and Democratic parties.

## Save the Date! 2008-2009 Calendar



Oct 23, 1:00 p.m.	CareNet presentation Toledo City Council
Nov. 4	Election Day
Nov. 6, 6:30 p.m.	Board Meeting 7632 Shadywood Darcy Yates' home
Nov. 10, 11:30 a.m.	Observer Corps orientation meeting. Cafe Marie, 3344 Secor Road.
Nov. 11	Veterans Day
Nov. 11, 6:30 p.m.	Observer Corps orientation meeting. Sanger Library, 3030 W. Central
Nov. 17	Voter Deadline
Dec. 9, 11:30 a.m.	Holiday Luncheon, Carranor Polo Club, 502 E. 2nd St. Perrysburg sponsored by the Perrysburg LWV
Dec. 15	Bill of Rights Day
Jan. 7	Voter Deadline
Jan. 15	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Jan. 26, 6:00 p.m.	Board Meeting and Program Planning location tba
Feb. 4	Voter Deadline
Feb. 14	League Birthday
Feb. 16	Presidents Day
Feb. 26, 5:30 p.m.	General Meeting Consensus on LWVO tax position
Mar. 5	Voter Deadline
Mar. 8	International Women's Day
Mar. 17-21	Sunshine Week
Mar. 21, 10:30 a.m.	Board Meeting location tba
Mar. 30	Reception for Public Officials
April 3	Voter Deadline
April 7	World Health Day
April 15	Tax Deadline
April 22	Earth Day
April 23, 6:00 p.m.	Signature Event
May 1-3	LWVO Convention, Crown Plaza, Dublin, OH
May 28, 6:00 p.m.	Annual Meeting
June 9	Voter Deadline
June 30, 4:00-9:00 p.m.	Joint Board Meeting

**All league meetings are open to all members. Please come and bring a guest.**



### **LWVO Voter Protection Hotline -**

1-866-OUR-VOTE for free confidential nonpartisan advice to citizens.

### **State and Local Issues Information**

If you are looking for information on what issues will be on your ballot check the board of elections website and download the issues directly to your computer. There are over 30 local issues, including some very specific precinct level issues. You can get to the BOE site through the LWV-TLC website link, [www.lwvtoledo.org/Links.htm](http://www.lwvtoledo.org/Links.htm), to Lucas County. There you will also find the link to the LWVO site which has a download able file for the five state ballot issues you will face when you vote. A paper copy of the local issues will be included in the version of the Voter sent by US Mail.

### **League on WGTE-TV**

Watch for the League PSA on channel 30 from now until Election Day urging people to be informed voters. Also tune in to see local candidates highlight their positions in short segments just after the News Hour with Jim Lehrer. They are introduced by Darcy Yates for LWVTLC and WGTE-TV.

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## Thank you to ...

Norma Mercurio, from Church Women United, for her contribution to LWVTLC Education Fund.



## LWVO Sponsors Supreme Court Candidates Debate

Watch a replay of the Oct. 16 Supreme Court candidates Debate on November 1 at 5:00 p.m. on the ONN (Ohio News Network) if you have access to the Time Warner Cablesystem, Channel 119 in Lucas county.

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## President's Letter



This is my first President's Letter and I would like to take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Rosemary Alloy and I am honored, and pleased to have been selected as co-president during my third year as a sister member of LWV-TLC. I have been active for several years in community politics. The gift of these experiences will enhance my service to you.

It is my pleasure to kick off the rebirth of the Observer Corps. This is an excellent Program for the League, as we will be able to observe our Government in action. And there is a place for each of our members on this committee.

I strongly urge all members to attend the orientation. Observer Corps information/ orientation meetings will be held on two separate days and times to accommodate members varied schedules; November 10 at 11:30 a.m. at Cafe Marie on Secor Road and November 11 at 6:30 p.m. at Sanger Library on West Central, near Westgate. Please choose one of these meetings to come and learn about and sign up for the Observer Corps.

This will afford you the opportunity to select your niche. We will be in need of full-time and substitute observers. I look forward to meeting all of you at these events.

If you have any questions about the LWV Observer Corps. You can reach me by phone at 419-578-0712 or email [alloy7@aol.com](mailto:alloy7@aol.com).

~ Rosemary



# ***The Voter***

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***The League of Women Voters of  
Toledo-Lucas County  
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Northwest Ohio Community Shares***



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF TOLEDO-LUCAS COUNTY  
PO Box 2506, Toledo, OH 43606**